



# The International Journal of Human Resource Management

ISSN: 0958-5192 (Print) 1466-4399 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rijh20>

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**To cite this article:** Ran (Michelle) Ye, Xiao-Hua (Frank) Wang, J. Hein Wendt, Jinxi Wu & Martin C. Euwema (2015): Gender and managerial coaching across cultures: female managers are coaching more, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, DOI: [10.1080/09585192.2015.1075570](https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1075570)

**To link to this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1075570>



Published online: 22 Oct 2015.



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## Gender and managerial coaching across cultures: female managers are coaching more

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Despite the increasing popularity of managerial coaching in organizations worldwide, little is known with regard to how gender and culture may affect managerial behavior. The present study is the first empirical study on managerial coaching on a global scale. Based on social role theory, role congruity theory, and cross-cultural theory, we first expect female leaders to engage in more coaching behavior than male leaders. Second, we expect that male leadership, particularly coaching behavior, is more influenced by societal culture than female leadership. Survey data were obtained from more than 600,000 employees, assessing coaching behavior of more than 130,000 practicing managers from 51 countries/areas. Results support both expectations. Taken together, this study has advanced our empirical and theoretical understanding of managerial coaching on a global scale.

**Keywords:** culture; gender; managerial coaching

### Introduction

Contemporary organizations have been changing rapidly in the past few decades, due to the technological development and socio-economic prosperity in the context of globalization (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). These changes have brought new challenges for human resource management. Many practices that were traditionally conducted by human resource professionals are now being transferred to supervisors and line managers (Hall & Torrington, 1998; Schuler, 1990). In particular, supervisors and line managers are now expected to develop their subordinates and facilitate their learning (Thornhill & Saunders, 1998). Also, task-oriented leadership is being transformed to or combined with more people-oriented leadership (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Fletcher, 2004). These trends highlight the importance of *managerial coaching*, defined as a process in which managers (i.e. direct supervisors) communicate goals and expectations with subordinates, provide them with regular feedback and learning opportunities, in order to enhance subordinate performance and facilitate their professional development (Ellinger, Ellinger, & Keller, 2003; Heslin, Vandewalle, & Latham, 2006). To facilitate employee development, human resource management now may need to switch their emphasis from organizing off-site training and

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development programs to helping line managers conduct effective on-site coaching with their subordinates (Mindell, 1995; Yarnall, 1998).

Managerial coaching has become increasingly popular in organizations during the past two decades (McCarthy & Milner, 2013). On the one hand, organizations are making significant efforts to build internal capability by training managers to coach (Ellinger, Ellinger, Bachrach, Wang, & Elmadagbas, 2011). On the other hand, managers, by acting as a coach, are taking more responsibility for performing HRD practices on helping employees achieve excellent performance (Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2008; Heslin et al., 2006). Accordingly, in the human resource management and coaching literatures, researchers have attempted to identify effective managerial coaching behavior (Ellinger, Hamlin, & Beattie, 2008; McLean, Yang, Kuo, Tolbert, & Larkin, 2005). Empirical evidence has also demonstrated the positive effects of managerial coaching on subordinates' role clarity (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999), work attitudes (Kim, Egan, Kim, & Kim, 2013), personal learning (Beattie, 2002; Park, 2007), organizational commitment and decreased turnover intention (Park, 2007), job satisfaction (Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2006) and work-related individual performance as well as organization performance (Agarwal, Angst, & Magni, 2009; Ladyshevsky, 2010; Liu & Batt, 2010).

Despite the development of coaching literature from various theoretical perspectives, the empirical research on managerial coaching is still in its infancy (Egan & Hamlin, 2014). First, the impact of demographic factors such as gender and age are hardly studied. Gender of the focal manager is argued to be particularly relevant (Ayman & Korabik, 2010), but has only received scant systematic exploration as one of the predictors of managers' propensity to coach (Anderson, 2013; Hamlin et al., 2006). So far, we still do not know if there is a gender difference in the amount of managerial coaching behavior on a global scale. Thus, the first purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of managers' gender on their coaching behavior. Furthermore, the presence of women in management (WIM) has increased significantly in the last decades. However, female managers are still the minority in modern organizations around the world. They still suffer from prejudicial evaluations of their management competence (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Thus, scholars (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Vecchio, 2002) have called for more research to explore how these 'WIM' can find their way through the predicament with prejudicial evaluations. Answering this call, the present study examines gender's impact on managerial coaching by proposing that globally female managers may overcome the gender disadvantage by displaying more coaching behavior towards their subordinates.

Second, very few studies have examined how societal culture may influence managers' coaching behavior (Hamlin et al., 2006). This is an important question, because managers working in a global context need to understand how much coaching is expected by subordinates in different cultures, so that they can adjust their behavior accordingly (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). In addition, previous research on managerial coaching has relied heavily on Western theories and data (Beattie et al., 2014). While a few studies (e.g. Kim, Egan, & Moon, 2013; Noer, Leupold, & Valle, 2007) have investigated managerial coaching in Eastern countries, no study has examined this phenomenon with a wider range of societal cultural contexts. By investigating societal culture's impact on managerial coaching, this study answers the call by Kim, Egan, and Moon (2013) for more cross-cultural research to fill in this significant gap in the coaching literature.

Using a theory-driven approach, the present study identifies two cultural dimensions that may influence the extent to which managers will display coaching behavior towards their subordinates. The two dimensions are Individualism–Collectivism (IC) and Gender

Egalitarianism (GE). IC is the degree to which people in a country prefer to act as individuals vs. as a group (Hofstede, 1980). IC, as the most documented and recognized among the cultural dimensions, has been studied widely in organizational research (Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007; Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006). IC reveals the most evident differences between the East and the West (Hofstede, 2007). The close attention from the manager, and the interdependent relationships between collectivist managers and their subordinates are important features of managerial coaching (Gregory & Levy, 2010). Therefore, IC may impact managers' coaching behavior because it determines how managers define their relationship with their subordinates. GE is defined as 'beliefs about whether members' biological sex should determine the roles that they play in their homes, business organizations and communities (Emrich, Denmark, & Den Hartog, 2004, p. 347)'. Just as gender may influence the extent to which managers display managerial coaching behavior, it is possible that societal values related to gender roles (i.e. GE) may also affect managerial coaching behavior. The second purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which societal IC and GE may influence manager's coaching behavior. We excluded other cultural variables (e.g. uncertainty avoidance, assertiveness) that do not have clear theoretical links to managerial coaching.

Last but not least, gender and cross-cultural studies tend to exist in two separate management literatures (Kark, 2004). We have yet to know how gender and cultures may interact to affect managerial coaching. Researchers (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Van Emmerik, Euwema, & Wendt, 2008) have called for more studies integrating the gender and cross-cultural perspectives in leadership research. Therefore, the third purpose of this study is to examine whether gender will moderate the relationships between the two cultural dimensions (i.e. IC and GE) and managerial coaching behavior. Such investigation is not only relevant from a theoretical perspective, but also important for practitioners, who may need sound information to prevent them from stereotypical and ethnocentric thinking on managerial behavior (Eagly & Chin, 2010).

Using a sample of more than 130,000 managers and their subordinates working in a range of companies in 51 countries/areas, we attempt to answer the following research questions: (a) What is the relationship between gender and managerial coaching? (b) What is the relationship between societal culture (i.e. IC and GE) and managerial coaching? And (c) How does gender and societal culture interact to influence managerial coaching?

### Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Employees may be coached by their manager, their peers, or by a professional from outside the organization. This study focuses on *managerial coaching*, which is conducted by the employee's direct supervisor. There is a variety of slightly different definitions of managerial coaching. For instance, Greene and Grant (2003) defined coaching as an outcome-focused process which facilitates self-directed learning. Other scholars have recognized the importance of providing relevant development opportunities (Day, 2000) and described managerial coaching as 'a day-to-day process of helping employees recognize opportunities to improve' (Ellinger et al., 2003, p. 438). In summary, managerial coaching is generally viewed as a managerial behavior intended to improve subordinates' performance and facilitate their learning and development.

Managerial coaching was traditionally viewed as an 'instructional' intervention (Parsloe, 1992). However, more recent studies (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Heslin et al., 2006; Peterson & Little, 2005) have defined managerial coaching from a 'facilitation'

perspective. Specifically, managerial coaching is not a one-way, directive, or short-term performance-driven-only intervention (Agarwal et al., 2009; Anderson, 2013; Ellinger, 2013; Ladyshevsky, 2010). In contrast, it is a long-term collaborative process, during which the manager acts as a partner with the subordinate. Instead of simply providing answers and directions, the manager actively listens to the subordinate and works together with the subordinate to find the solution (Peterson & Little, 2005). The manager also needs to adapt to individual differences and provides feedback, supports and resources according to the subordinate's progress and development (Duff, 2013). For any coaching to be effective, the manager-subordinate relationship, with mutual trust and shared values, is a fundamental feature (Egan & Hamlin, 2014), a basic element (Gregory & Levy, 2010) and 'the real vehicle for change (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007, p. 168)'.

### ***Gender and managerial coaching***

Gender differences 'may be driven by biologically based differences that are reinforced by socialization processes, and/or differing gender stereotypes that influence role expectations (Yukl, 2002, p. 413)'. According to the gender perspective (Carless, 1998), differences in behavior of men and women originate in socialization processes, through which people learn to conform to gender-based expectations that define appropriate conduct. Similarly, social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000) proposes that managerial behavior is influenced by the gender role. To the extent that gender role affects managerial behavior, female and male managers would behave differently in accordance with gender stereotypes (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001). *Gender stereotypes* refer to consensual beliefs regarding gender differences in traits and behaviors, which are pervasive and widely shared by both men and women (Kark & Eagly, 2010). Typically, women are expected to hold *communal* qualities (such as being sympathetic, friendly, helping and supporting). In contrast, men are expected to hold *agentic* attributes, such as being assertive, dominant, ambitious and confident (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These stereotypical attributes have been adopted to explain gender differences in leadership styles. Stereotypical masculine leadership style characterizes directive and command-and-control behavior, while stereotypical feminine leadership style characterizes collaborative and participative behavior (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

We argue that managerial coaching, as a collaborative developmental intervention, is more aligned with the stereotypical feminine leadership style. Coaching involves frequent communication and mutual acceptance between the manager and the subordinate. The manager develops a partnership with the subordinate, and provides in-depth role-play and intensive behavior modeling (Ellinger et al., 2008; Hagen & Peterson, 2014). Evidence has shown that female managers tend to display leadership behavior aligned with communal qualities prescribed by the female role (Kark & Eagly, 2010). For instance, Carless (1998) found that, compared with male managers, female managers demonstrated more interpersonally oriented behavior, such as participatory decision-making, recognizing individual contributions and caring for individual needs. Similarly, Anderson, Lievens, Van Dam, and Born (2006) showed that females were rated notably higher on interpersonally oriented leadership style, including oral communication and interaction. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that the advantage in interpersonal behavior will facilitate female managers to display more coaching behavior towards their subordinates. Furthermore, Eagly and Carli (2003) found that female leaders were reported

to exhibit higher levels of transformational leadership behavior than male leaders, particularly on the subscales of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. These dimensions are consistent with the essence of managerial coaching, because they motivate employees to reach ambitious goals, focus on the development of followers and attend to individual needs (Wang & Howell, 2010, 2012).

By contrast, male managers may be less likely to display leadership behavior associated with feminine communal attributes (Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012). For example, several studies have shown that male managers display less considerate behavior than female managers (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999; Van Emmerik, Euwema, & Wendt, 2008). Eagly and Carli (2003) also reported that male leaders obtained higher scores than females on management by exception and laissez-faire leadership. These findings suggest that, compared with females, male managers may be less likely to take a proactive role in facilitating the development of their followers. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: compared with male managers, female managers display more managerial coaching behavior towards their subordinates.

### ***Individualism–Collectivism and managerial coaching***

Hofstede (1980) defines *Collectivism* as a preference for a tightly knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Similarly, the GLOBE project defines Collectivism as ‘the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations or families (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004, p. 12)’.

Collectivistic cultures emphasize interdependence among organizational members. People in these cultures tend to have closer interpersonal relationships with each other and tend to be more sympathetic towards others’ feelings and concerns (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As a result, managers in collectivistic cultures may pay closer attention to their subordinates’ job-related issues and use coaching to help them resolve any concerns. Furthermore, the behavior of collectivists is regulated by their role obligations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The supervisor–subordinate relationship in organizations is perceived to be an extension of the father–son relationship in families. Therefore, the leader is expected to be responsible for their subordinates’ personal problems and career development (Jung, Bass, & Sosik, 1995). As a result, managers in collectivistic cultures may exhibit a higher level of coaching behavior than managers in individualistic cultures. Meanwhile, collectivistic subordinates are more likely to appreciate their manager’s care and support, because they tend to seek advice and guidance from their supervisor (Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Based on this discussion, we can see that the characteristics of collectivistic cultures (e.g. collective goals, relationship-oriented, care and support from supervisors) are congruent with managerial coaching behavior.

In contrast, people in individualistic cultures are more likely to view self as independent of others (Triandis, 1995). Individual initiative and autonomy are respected and valued in individualistic cultures (Singelis, 1994). Compared with collectivists, subordinates in individualist cultures may prefer a less personalized relationship with their manager, in order to maintain their independence and autonomy (Jung & Avolio,



1999). Individualists may be less dependent on their managers when pursuing their personal development, because they are expected to take care of themselves (Oyserman et al., 2002). Thus, it is reasonable to argue that managerial coaching may be more easily facilitated in collectivistic cultures.

Hypothesis 2: Managers in collectivistic cultures display more managerial coaching behavior towards their subordinates than those in individualistic cultures.

### *Gender Egalitarianism and managerial coaching*

Just as the manager's gender might influence his/her managerial coaching behavior, it is also possible that societal values related to gender may play a role. Traditional gender beliefs expect men to be the breadwinners and women to be the homemakers of the family (Eagly, 1987). *GE* refers to the extent to which a society minimizes the gender role differences and promotes gender equality (Emrich et al., 2004).

Low *GE* cultures are characterized with differentiated gender roles. People act in compliance with their gender role norms (Costa et al., 2001), which means a high level of masculine characteristics for men, and a high level of feminine characteristics for women, with a relative exclusion of the other dimension (Park, 1997). The predominant leadership prototype in low *GE* cultures is composed of masculine attributes, such as directive and autocratic leadership styles (Paris, Howell, Dorfman, & Hanges, 2009). Therefore, managerial coaching, which denotes feminine attributes, such as nurturing and supporting, may be difficult to be facilitated in low *GE* cultures (Emrich, et al., 2004). In high *GE* cultures, however, traditional gender role beliefs are less apparent and women hold similar authority and status as men in organizations (Emrich et al., 2004). People in high *GE* cultures tend to hold modern gender role ideologies, which treat men and women as equals and advocate egalitarian relationships between them (Best & Williams, 1993). Men and women are expected to share breadwinner and homemaker responsibilities.

We argue that the gender equality in high *GE* cultures will result in a higher level of managerial coaching for two reasons. First, Paris et al. (2009) reported that there are more women holding managerial positions in high *GE* cultures than in low *GE* cultures. In addition, Van Emmerik, Wendt, and Euwema (2010) find that in organizations with more female managers, employees experience more supportive leadership behavior and less directive leadership behavior from their managers. Taken together, it is reasonable to argue that a higher ratio of female managers in high *GE* cultures will enhance the average level of managerial coaching behavior, which reflects feminine and communal leadership style. Second, gender equality in high *GE* cultures may also motivate male managers to adopt the androgynous leadership style, which combines both masculine and feminine attributes (Blanchard & Sargent, 1984; Park, 1997). Since the gender differences are minimized in high *GE* cultures, male managers may be more likely to acknowledge the importance of communal leadership style and to display managerial coaching than their counterparts in low *GE* cultures. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 3: Managers in cultures with high gender egalitarianism display more managerial coaching behavior towards their subordinates than those in cultures with low gender egalitarianism.

***Gender as a moderator in the relationships between cultural dimensions and managerial coaching***

The gender–culture perspective (Fullagar, Sumer, Sverke, & Slick, 2003; Gibson, 1995; Paris et al., 2009; Van Emmerik et al., 2008) proposes that gender and societal culture may interact to influence manager's behavior, such that the extent to which societal culture affects manager's behavior may depend on the gender of the manager. Specifically, we argue that societal values (i.e. IC and GE) may have a stronger impact on the coaching behavior of male managers than that of female managers.

We propose that female managers will display coaching behavior regardless of their societal culture origins. As stated above, social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2000) suggests that women are expected to be communal (e.g. nurturing, sensitive, understanding) and men are expected to be agentic (e.g. assertive, confident and controlling). At the same time, individuals hold stereotypes of how leaders should behave (Lord & Maher, 1993). Globally, these leadership stereotypes are more aligned with agentic than communal attributes (Schein, Müller, Lituchy, & Liu, 1996). That is, people around the world tend to believe that effective leaders should hold agentic qualities, such as competitiveness, assertiveness and confidence. According to role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), prejudice against female leaders arises because of the incongruity between the communal qualities associated with women and the agentic qualities associated with effective leaders. Female managers, who fulfill the agentic requirements of leader roles, may still be evaluated less favorably than their male peers because they are perceived to violate their gender role as a woman.

Eagly and Karau (2002) argued that when females exhibit more communal leadership behavior, such behavior decreases agentic women's disparity from their female gender roles and thus mitigates the less favorable reactions to female leaders. In support of this notion, Vinkenbarg, Van Engen, Eagly, and Johannesen-Schmidt (2011) found that in terms of promotion, developmental and nurturing behavior is more important for female managers than for male managers. Furthermore, Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, and Reichard (2008) reported that, while male leaders need to demonstrate masculine leadership behavior, female leaders may display both masculine and feminine behavior in order to be perceived as effective. Therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that, globally, female managers may utilize managerial coaching behavior to ensure their management effectiveness, and to attain favorable evaluations in their organizations. Their coaching behavior is thus less dependent on societal cultures.

However, male managers do not face the same situation across cultures. Men's social status means that they have more access to power and resources than women, and consequently have greater privileges. For instance, male managers report less job-related pressure than female managers (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999; Siu, Lu, & Cooper, 1999). Male managers may be evaluated more favorably than similarly qualified and experienced females (Foschi, 2000); and male managers average more promotions than female managers (Gold & Pringle, 1988). Therefore, compared with female managers, male managers' motivation to engage in coaching behavior may be more likely to be influenced by the expectation for coaching specified by the societal culture.

Male managers in collectivistic cultures may coach more than those in individualistic cultures, because collectivistic cultures expect managers to look after their subordinates' well-being and development in exchange for loyalty and trust from the subordinates (Jung et al., 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Similarly, under the influence of more egalitarian role division in high GE cultures (Lyness & Judiesch, 2008),



male managers are more likely to adopt communal leadership style and display managerial coaching, which help their subordinates to develop their skills and abilities (Emrich et al., 2004). By contrast, male managers in low GE cultures need to act in compliance with ‘masculine’ stereotypes (Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012). Thus, they may feel more hesitant to demonstrate communal coaching behavior where the masculine and autocratic leadership style prevails (Paris et al., 2009). In sum, we hypothesize that, compared with female managers, male managers’ coaching behavior is more susceptible to the influence of Collectivism and GE.

Hypothesis 4: Gender moderates the positive relationship between Collectivism and managers’ coaching behavior, such that the relationship is stronger for male managers than for female managers.

Hypothesis 5: Gender moderates the positive relationship between gender egalitarianism and managers’ coaching behavior, such that the relationship is stronger for male managers than for female managers.

## Method

### *Data and sample*

This study uses data from a database of a multinational consulting firm named Hay Group. The original database contains multi-assessment data from managers and their direct reports, from a wide range of public and private industries and services. The data were collected during 2002–2011, as part of an assessment of in-house management training programs, thus guaranteeing an almost 100% response rate. In total, we had data on coaching behavior of 133,707 managers (74% male and 26% female) rated by their 605,367 subordinates in 1752 organizations in 51 countries. The respondents’ average age was 43 years ( $SD = 7.8$ ). An average of 4.53 subordinates ( $SD = 2.96$ ) rated each target manager and these ratings were anonymously aggregated back to the corresponding managers. Appendix 1 shows the number of managers, the number of subordinates, the percentage of female managers and the means of coaching and cultural dimensions per country/area.

### *Measurements*

*Managerial coaching* was measured by six items from Managerial Style Inventory (MSI<sup>®</sup>), a 68-item questionnaire, originally developed from the scales of Litwin and Stringer (1968) and later adapted by Hay Group (Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2010; Houldsworth & Jirasinghe, 2006). Validated measures of managerial coaching do exist (e.g. Heslin et al., 2006), but they are not included in the MSI<sup>®</sup> database. Thus, we first reviewed the MSI<sup>®</sup> questionnaire and identified 12 items that conceptually captured the essence of managerial coaching. Next, we followed the procedure of Gentry et al. (2008) to conduct a content analysis of those items.

Twenty-six subject-matter experts (SMEs) were asked to assess the extent to which each of the 12 items was consistent with our aforementioned coaching definition on a seven-point scale (1 = very inconsistent, 7 = very consistent). Fourteen of the SMEs were professors or PhD students in industrial/organizational psychology. The other 12 SMEs were practitioners with at least 10 year experience in human resource management, training, or general management. We selected six items that were rated as highly consistent with our coaching definition (mean  $\geq 6$  on the 7-point scale). Eighty-one

percent of the participants agreed that these items were consistent with the coaching definition we provided. The average  $R_{wg}$  for these items is .77. Cronbach's alpha was .85.

These selected MSI<sup>®</sup> items used a bipolar six-point scale (answers from A to F), with contrasting statements on the poles of the scale. Sample items are (A): 'My manager works with what subordinates bring to the job, but does not put much effort into developing them.' vs. (F): 'My manager puts a great deal of effort into developing subordinates.' and (A) 'My manager lets subordinates find ways to complete their tasks themselves.' vs. (F) 'My manager helps subordinates think through the who, when and how of completing tasks.' For the complete scale, please refer to Appendix 2.

*Gender of the manager* was used as an independent variable. We consider gender as biological sex. In the analysis, we coded 0 for male and 1 for female.

*Societal cultures* were measured by the national scores from the GLOBE project (House et al., 2004). Following prior studies (Atwater, Wang, Smither, & Fleenor, 2009; Lyness & Judiesch, 2008), we used the GLOBE country practice (referred to as 'as is') rather than values (referred to as 'should be') scores as our measures of Collectivism and Gender Egalitarianism. This is because practice scores reflected the ways values are currently being displayed, and thus are more likely to affect people's behavior in each culture. Furthermore, GLOBE divides Collectivism into two different dimensions: Institutional Collectivism and In-Group Collectivism (IGC). Institutional Collectivism focuses on the practices of organizational and societal institutions, and assesses the degree to which institutions advocate 'collective action and the collective distribution of resources' (House et al., 2004, p. 463). In contrast, IGC focuses on the behavioral tendency of individuals and is defined as 'the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations or families (House et al., 2004, p. 12)'. Since managerial coaching is an interpersonal behavior between the manager and the subordinates, IGC, which reflects individuals' behavioral tendency in a society, is more relevant to our study. IGC is conceptually consistent with Hofstede's original definition of IC, and is strongly correlated with Hofstede's IC scale (Gelfand, Bhawuk, Nishii, & Bechtold, 2004). Therefore, we used the societal cultural practice country scores on IGC and GE, as documented in GLOBE (House et al., 2004). A sample item for Collectivism is 'In this society, leaders encourage group loyalty even if individual goals suffer' (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree). A sample item for GE is 'In this society, who is more likely to serve in a position of high office?' (1 = men, 4 = men and women are equally likely to serve, 7 = women) (House et al., 2004).

### ***Language issues and measurement equivalence across countries***

Language issues are always a major concern in cross-cultural studies. The MSI<sup>®</sup> items were all translated from English into the languages of the participating countries by native speakers, using the application mode of translation (Van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004). This method implicitly assumes that the underlying construct is appropriate for each cultural group and that a simple, straightforward translation will suffice to get an instrument that adequately measures the same construct in the target group. The translators (consultants) were trained in the concepts, and familiar with the societies' cultures, therefore their translations represent the concepts adequately.

Measurement equivalence is both important and difficult to achieve in cross-national studies. For this study, a multigroup CFA analysis was conducted to compare 22 countries which each had over 1000 participants, in order to confirm that our 6-item

coaching scale had a stable structure across those countries. This procedure is recommended by several authors (Peterson et al., 1995; Reise, Widaman, & Pugh, 1993; Scandura, Williams, & Hamilton, 2001). We performed a multiple group analysis comparing 22 groups (i.e. countries) in one analysis. The goal is to check whether the coaching scale has the same factor model in all the countries, by constraining the item-parameters and item-variance to be equal across the groups, to justify that the construct has the same meaning in all the countries tested (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). The average CFI was .944, NFI .942, and RMSEA = .018, which were all above the thresholds (CFI > .90 indicates reasonable good fit, RMSEA  $\leq$  .05 indicates close approximate fit) (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2010), indicating that the construct has the same meaning in all the countries tested.

### ***Control variables***

Because over two-thirds of the sampled managers were male, our sample reflected a predominantly male leadership context, and it is possible that female managers may act differently because they are not in the majority group (Wang, Chiang, Tsai, Lin, & Cheng, 2013). To clarify whether the source of observed effects was gender, we controlled for gender composition by industry and per country (Van Emmerik et al., 2010). We also controlled for year and industry because the information in our sample was collected during 10 years and the managers in our study worked in a variety of organizations. In addition, we controlled for societal power distance (House et al., 2004), because the degree of inequality between managers and subordinates may suppress the reciprocity in managerial coaching practice (Anderson, 2013, p. 252). However, no significant impact of power distance was found, which is also in line with prior cross-cultural findings on coaching and societal power distance (Kim, Egan, & Moon, 2013). In sum, the results showed that none of those control variables challenged the results of our hypothesis testing. For parsimonious reasons, we did not include those controls in our final analysis.

### ***Aggregation issue***

An average 4.53 subordinates (SD = 2.96) rated each target manager on managerial coaching behavior. We calculated  $R_{wg}$  for within-group homogeneity (.65) and ICC (.69) to provide an estimate of the reliability of the group. The result was similar to other studies using comparable multi-source data (Gentry et al., 2008; Graves, Ohlott, & Ruderman, 2007), and supported our aggregation of subordinate ratings.

### ***Analytical approach***

We used Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) (HLM 6.0) to test our hypotheses, because HLM is the most appropriate analytical technique to account for the inherent nested relationship (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002; Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, Congdon, & du Toit, 2005).

## **Results**

We first conducted some preliminary analysis. Managerial coaching was positively correlated with gender ( $r = .16$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The average score of coaching behavior of

male managers was 3.81 (SD = .69), which was lower than that of female managers (M = 3.96; SD = .66). Managerial coaching was also positively related to Collectivism ( $r = .04, p < .01$ ), suggesting that coaching was more displayed in collectivistic countries. Coaching and GE are unexpectedly negatively correlated ( $r = -.03, p < .01$ ), meaning that coaching was practiced more in low GE countries. GE is negatively related to societal Collectivism ( $r = -.40, p < .01$ ). Lastly, gender was positively related to GE ( $r = .04, p < .01$ ) and negatively related with Collectivism ( $r = -.09, p < .01$ ), suggesting that in our sample, there are more female managers in countries scoring high on GE and Individualism.

**Hypotheses testing**

We used HLM to test our hypotheses. At the manager level (level 1), coaching scores and gender information were used. At the country level (level 2), GLOBE’s in-group Collectivism and GE scores were used. After standardizing the independent variables, the interaction terms were built (Aiken & West, 1991). The variables for the analysis were entered in three steps. In Step 1, the null model was estimated. In Step 2, the main effects were added. In Step 3, the cross-level interactions were added. Table 1 shows the results of this analysis.

As shown in Model 2 in Table 1, gender was positively related to coaching ( $\gamma = .16, p < .01$ ). Collectivism was positively related to coaching ( $\gamma = .04, p < .01$ ). Thus, both Hypothesis 1 and 2 were supported. GE was negatively related to coaching ( $\gamma = -.03, p < .01$ ), which means that coaching was more often used in cultures scoring low on GE. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicts that gender moderates the positive relationship between Collectivism and coaching, such that the relationship is stronger for male managers than for female managers. As presented in Model 3 in Table 1, the interaction term of gender with Collectivism was negative and significant ( $\gamma = -.06, p < .01$ ). We plot this interaction in Figure 1, which suggests that the positive relationship between

Table 1. Multi-level analysis for coaching (number of managers = 133,707, number of subordinates = 605,367, number of organizations = 1752, number of countries/areas = 51).

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	$\gamma$	SE	$\gamma$	SE	$\gamma$	SE
<i>Step 1</i>						
Intercept	3.84*	.02	3.77*	.02	3.77*	.01
<i>Step 2</i>						
Gender			.16*	.00	.15*	.00
In-Group Collectivism (P)			.04*	.02	.06*	.02
Gender Egalitarianism (P)			-.03*	.01	-.03*	.01
<i>Step 3</i>						
Gender × In-Group Collectivism (p)					-.06*	.01
Gender × Gender Egalitarianism (p)					.02*	.01
2 log likelihood	259,701.62		258,460.14		258,201.13	
$\Delta -2\log$ likelihood			1,241.48 *		259.01 *	

\* $p < .01$ .

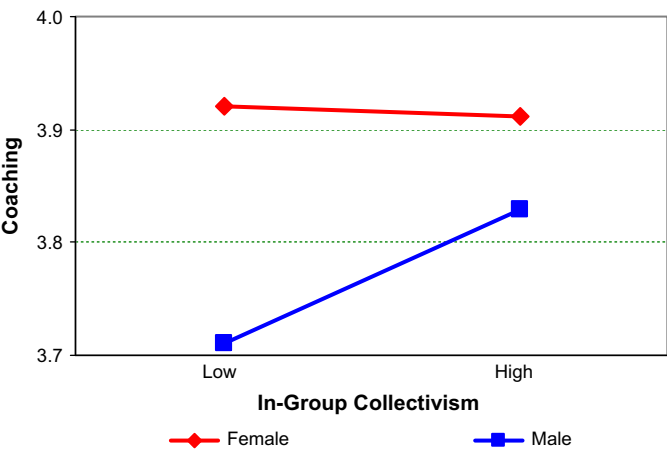


Figure 1. The moderating role of gender on the relationship between IC and coaching.

Collectivism and coaching was stronger for male managers than for female managers. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Hypothesis 5 predicts that gender moderates the positive relationship between GE and coaching, such that the relationship is stronger for male managers than for female managers. As presented in Model 3 in Table 1, the interaction term of gender with GE was positive and significant ( $\gamma = .02, p < .01$ ). We plot this interaction in Figure 2. The relationship between GE and coaching was stronger for male managers. However, contrary to H5, the direction of this relation was negative rather than positive, meaning that male managers in high GE cultures practice *less* coaching than male managers in low GE cultures. So Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

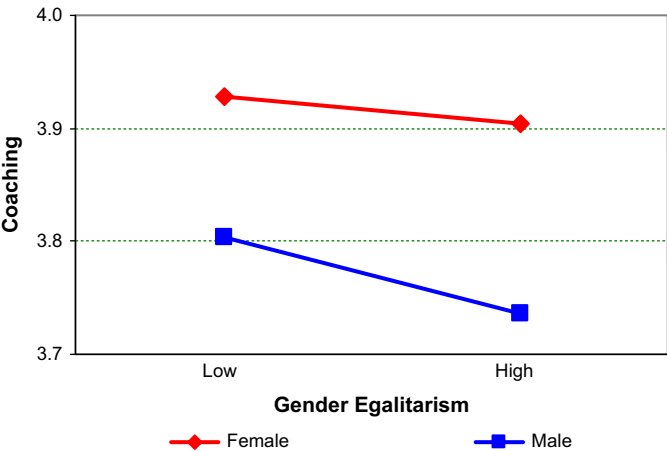


Figure 2. The moderating role of gender on the relationship between GE and coaching.

## Discussion, limitations and implications

### *Theoretical contributions*

Our knowledge of manager behavior will be incomplete if we do not consider the important roles of gender and culture (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). To our knowledge, this study is the first large-scale empirical study that focuses on managerial coaching in an international context. Using data collected from 51 countries/areas between 2002 and 2011, we examine the main and interactional effects of gender and two societal cultural variables (i.e. Collectivism and GE) on managerial coaching.

Our results showed that female managers display more coaching behavior than their male counterparts worldwide, suggesting that coaching is not a gender-neutral phenomenon. Female managers are facing double standards in organizations. They are expected to display agentic leadership behavior in order to indicate that they fit well into the masculine leadership stereotypes (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). However, such agentic leadership behavior may result in negative evaluations (Johnson et al., 2008). This is because, featured by their gender role, female managers are expected to demonstrate kind and friendly approaches (Eagly & Karau, 2002). According to Rudman and Glick (2001), such perception of gender role violation may hinder women in business unless they temper it with desirable femininity.

As Eagly and Chin (2010, p. 218) concluded, ‘simultaneously impressing others as a good leader and a good woman’ is not easy. However, our finding suggests that female managers may accomplish this goal by strategically adopting managerial coaching behavior. They can leverage such behavior to demonstrate their leadership competence without necessarily being perceived as ‘agentic women’ in the organizations. During the coaching process, female managers not only demonstrate directing and guiding behavior, but also help and support followers to develop their own skills and capabilities. Therefore, managerial coaching may be an effective way for female managers to deal with double standards in organizations.

Second, this study contributes to cross-cultural research and leadership theory by revealing the impact of collectivistic values on the practice of managerial coaching. Ellinger et al. (2003) have theorized that managerial coaching may be more easily facilitated in more collaborative working environment. So far, no study has tested this proposition in the global context. Our results lend support to this notion by suggesting that managers in collectivistic cultures are reported to exhibit more coaching behavior than those in individualistic cultures. According to the GLOBE project (Gelfand et al., 2004), managers in collectivistic cultures feel obligated to take responsibility for their subordinates’ welfare. They tend to focus on relational interactions with subordinates, and exhibit more nurturing and developmental behavior. Similarly, Hofstede (1980, 2007) states that collectivists tend to have stronger emotional interdependence with each other, and emphasize belonging to their organization. In the meantime, subordinates in collectivistic cultures are more likely to welcome and appreciate manager’s coaching behavior, as they expect more guidance, advice and support from their supervisor (Oyserman et al., 2002).

Third, we found that gender moderated the positive relationship between IC and coaching, such that the relationship was stronger for male managers. Female managers in both collectivistic and individualistic cultures are motivated to coach their subordinates. This is probably because coaching behavior can effectively establish congruity between their gender role and leadership role and thus mitigate prejudice against them (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In contrast, male managers’ coaching behavior is more



responsive to societal Collectivism, meaning that male managers may practice more coaching when they are expected to fulfill the role obligations as collectivist managers.

Lastly, neither of the two hypotheses involving GE was supported. Contrary to our prediction, GE was negatively related to managerial coaching. And this negative relationship was stronger for male managers than for female managers. Our findings suggested that male managers in high GE cultures coach *less* than male managers in low GE cultures. One possible explanation could be that subordinates in low GE cultures interpret male coaching behavior differently than subordinates in high GE cultures. Kelley's (1972) attribution principles suggest that subordinates are likely to attribute manager behavior that is consistent with their expectations to situational constraints, but attribute manager behavior that departs from their expectations to the manager's internal motivation. Low GE cultures prescribe different gender roles for male and female managers. Male managers are expected to display masculine leadership behavior (Emrich et al., 2004). As a result, subordinates in low GE cultures may not expect their male supervisor to display much coaching behavior. When subordinates do receive caring, helping and facilitating behavior through managerial coaching, according to the attribution theory (Kelley, 1972), they may be likely to attribute this behavior to the internal motivation of the male manager's, and thus appreciate their manager's help even more. In other words, in low GE cultures, male manager coaching is more visible and salient to subordinates.

In contrast, high GE cultures minimize gender role differences and promote gender equality, where a more supportive and participative leadership style prevails (Emrich et al., 2004). Thus, male managers' coaching behavior may be less impressive and salient to subordinates in high GE cultures, than to those in low GE cultures. In addition, higher GE cultures have more women in professional and managerial positions (Paris et al., 2009). The subordinates in high GE cultures may have more exposure to female managers who practice more managerial coaching, which confirms the legitimacy of their high expectations. Their high standards may make them less satisfied with male manager coaching behavior. Taken together, the results suggest that we still have a great deal to learn about gender differences across cultures. More theory and research is needed to explain how gender and culture interact to affect managerial behavior (Dorfman, Hanges, & Brodbeck, 2004; Van Emmerik et al., 2008).

### ***Practical implications***

As outlined in our introduction, one of our main objectives is to provide empirically tested knowledge and help practitioner make well-informed decisions regarding managerial coaching development and practice. Nowadays, large organizations increasingly expect managers to coach their subordinates (Ellinger et al., 2003; Heslin et al., 2006). The finding that female managers coach more frequently across cultures supports the notion of involving more WIM. Contemporary organizations may need more female managers to boost subordinate development and to help the subordinates to cope with the frequent changes in structure, function and job rotations (Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012).

Second, our findings may be particularly informative for expatriate managers. The expatriate training program should help the managers adapt their managerial coaching behavior in order to meet the expectations of their followers in a different culture. Particularly, male managers who grew up in an individualistic culture but are about to work in a collectivistic culture, should be prepared to practice coaching more frequently

in their new role. Although, at first it may seem to be a time-consuming approach on the managers' agendas, eventually coaching may prove to be an effective way to obtain trust and loyalty from collectivist subordinates.

### ***Limitations and future research***

There are a number of limitations to take into account when interpreting our results. First, our data were collected from managers who participated in an in-house leadership training program. This may result in an over presentation of 'high performers' or 'managers with potentials' in our sample (Gentry et al., 2008). Also, although the organizations in our sample are highly diverse, many of them are international companies. Thus, our sample may not be representative of broader samples of managers in their respective countries. Second, the present research operationalizes managerial coaching as the length of time during which a manager provides individualized feedback and guidance. However, based exclusively on an existing database, this study only examined quantitative differences in terms of managerial coaching. Future research might incorporate existing coaching measures in a longitudinal design, and may explore whether there are qualitative differences in how managers with different gender or cultural backgrounds coach their subordinates. Furthermore, by interacting with the gender of the focal manager, subordinate's gender may also impact manager's coaching behavior. We were unable to test these possible effects because subordinate's gender was not available in our data. Last but not least, we implicitly assume that cultural boundaries are country boundaries, by assigning GLOBE country scores based on country of origin. This is a common approach in cross-cultural research (Atwater et al., 2009; Costa et al., 2001; Gentry et al., 2008; Lyness & Judiesch, 2008; Smith, 2004; Wendt, Euwema, & Van Emmerik, 2009); however, it fails to take into account the diversity of cultures represented in most countries (Avolio et al., 2009).

### **Conclusion**

The present study is the first large-scale empirical study on managerial coaching. Our results showed that, globally, female managers were found to engage in managerial coaching more regularly than male managers. Since coaching behavior may effectively establish congruity between female managers' gender role and leadership role, female managers may demonstrate more coaching behavior to deal with prejudice against them in organizations. Another major contribution of this study is expanding managerial coaching research into a cross-cultural context. We found that the coaching behavior of male managers is more susceptible to the influence of societal cultures than that of female managers. This study advances our understanding of managerial coaching on a global scale, while acknowledging the challenges and limitations associated with it.

### **Funding**

This work was supported by International cooperation projects within the framework of the 'China Fund' KU LEUVEN (ISP-China) [BIL11/17T].

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**Appendix 1.**

Table A1. Sample size and mean scores on the main variables per country.\*

	# of managers	# of subordinates	Gender (%) female	Coaching mean	IGC** (GLOBE)	GE** (2004)
Argentina	865	3128	18	3.84	5.51	3.44
Australia	7159	32,728	28	3.85	4.14	3.41
Austria	303	1505	20	3.72	4.89	3.18
Brazil	8467	38,174	18	4.00	5.16	3.44
Canada	1454	6648	30	3.80	4.22	3.66
China	5206	21,326	27	4.12	5.86	3.03
Columbia	2465	10,637	18	3.94	5.59	3.64
Costa Rica	120	342	28	3.92	5.32	3.56
Denmark	365	1628	19	3.59	3.63	4.02
Ecuador	99	382	31	3.99	5.81	3.07
Egypt	584	2182	14	3.98	5.49	2.90
El Salvador	135	374	36	3.97	5.35	3.16
Finland	280	1357	34	3.47	4.23	3.55
France	3568	17,677	23	3.74	4.66	3.81
Germany	3354	17,505	18	3.70	4.16	3.25
Greece	378	1742	24	3.90	5.28	3.53
Guatemala	309	1015	21	3.89	5.63	3.02
Hong Kong	45	196	36	3.71	5.33	3.26
Hungary	223	695	37	3.80	5.31	4.02
India	4193	17,590	11	3.96	5.81	2.89
Indonesia	580	1797	33	3.87	5.50	3.04
Iran	165	798	22	3.81	5.07	3.86
Ireland	1308	5105	35	3.82	5.12	3.19
Israel	392	1597	30	3.76	4.63	3.21
Italy	2361	11,017	21	3.90	4.99	3.30
Japan	2842	14,138	9	3.77	4.72	3.17
Malaysia	3555	12,256	30	3.90	5.47	3.31
Mexico	4958	13,514	16	3.76	5.62	3.50
Morocco	105	447	24	3.75	6.37	3.08
Netherlands	5853	28,677	19	3.71	3.79	3.62
New Zealand	1729	8090	28	3.75	3.58	3.18
Nigeria	235	875	32	4.16	5.34	3.04
Philippines	425	1379	48	4.01	6.14	3.42
Poland	1329	6260	37	3.44	5.55	3.94
Portugal	788	3539	24	3.79	5.64	3.69
Qatar	67	213	0	3.95	5.07	3.86
Russia	994	4342	32	3.84	5.83	4.07
Singapore	813	3179	38	3.79	5.66	3.52
South Africa	1071	4407	24	3.85	4.42	3.25
South Korea	2168	10,151	12	3.81	5.71	2.45
Spain	2261	12,442	24	3.85	5.53	3.06
Sweden	765	3930	42	3.73	3.46	3.72
Switzerland	475	2081	9	3.76	4.04	3.12
Taiwan	431	1471	39	3.92	5.45	2.92
Thailand	782	2877	40	3.73	5.72	3.26

(Continued)

Table A1. (Continued).

	# of managers	# of subordinates	Gender (%) female	Coaching mean	IGC** (GLOBE)	GE** (2004)
Turkey	1181	5420	25	3.73	5.79	3.02
United Kingdom	19,623	90,846	30	3.83	4.08	3.67
United States	35,269	171,951	33	3.88	4.22	3.36
Venezuela	1301	4478	29	4.02	5.41	3.60
Zambia	91	365	26	4.07	5.34	3.04
Zimbabwe	218	894	23	3.93	5.53	3.09

\*Total number of managers = 133,707; total number of subordinates = 605,367; total number of organizations = 1752; total number of countries/areas = 51. \*\*IGC and GE scores are GLOBE's IGC and GE scores by country, documented in House et al. (2004, pp. 742–747).

## Appendix 2. Managerial coaching items<sup>©</sup> Hay Group ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

- (1) My manager questions subordinates to understand why their goals are important to them.
- (2) My manager helps subordinates think through the who, when and how of completing tasks.
- (3) My manager spends a lot of time reviewing subordinates' progress to determine whether adjustments are necessary.
- (4) My manager spends a significant amount of time helping subordinates to improve their performance.
- (5) My manager puts a great deal of effort into developing subordinates.
- (6) My manager spends time looking for opportunities for subordinates' professional development.